

The Career Readiness Certificate

Employers know that the costs of hiring, training, and retention significantly affect their bottom line. The cost of making a good hire is high; the cost of making a bad hire is even greater!

In the private sector, there is great concern about the skills gap that exists between those skills required on the job and those exhibited by potential and incumbent workers. Employers experience significant difficulty in hiring people who have basic employability skills and who are therefore trainable for specific jobs. There is also dissatisfaction with the standard of employability of students who graduate from high school and college because academic competencies are often not supported by employability skills.

A portable skills credential that is easily and universally understood and valued by employers, educators and recipients would facilitate job placement, retention and advancement in our mobile society. Such a credential that describes exactly what the holder can do would be a terrific supplement to a high school diploma, a GED or a college degree, or it would be a great stand-alone credential.

It would be an especially useful economic development tool in cities and counties where the academic achievement levels of the incumbent, dislocated or potential workforce is an inhibitor to business development (relocation, expansion, etc).

To address these issues and as part of his *Education For A Lifetime* initiative, Gov. Mark Warner (D-VA) authorized the development of the **Career Readiness Certificate** in Virginia, and then, because he recognizes that all economies are regional and that regional economic success is largely determined by the availability of a skilled workforce, he encouraged the development and deployment of the CRC across the economic region comprising VA, TN, MD, DE, DC, KY, and NC.

Word of this **Career Readiness Certificate Consortium** spread quickly, and to date the **Consortium** consists of 17 states (*) but many more are expressing interest and willingness to deploy the credential. The matrix below indicates the current status of this interest in 30 states.

<u>Certificates deployed</u>	<u>Deployment in progress</u>	<u>Interested in deployment</u>
Kentucky*	North Carolina*	New Mexico
Indiana*	Oklahoma*	Colorado*
Virginia*	North Dakota	Michigan
Louisiana*	South Carolina*	Kansas*
Missouri*	Alabama*	California
	Tennessee*	Delaware*
	Wyoming	Maryland*
	District of Columbia*	Rhode Island
	Georgia*	Illinois
	West Virginia*	Hawaii
		Montana
		Minnesota
		Washington
		Oregon
		Idaho

* CRCC member

The ***Career Readiness Certificate*** is based on three WorkKeys® assessments: Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information, and is awarded at three levels: Bronze (level 3 on each assessment), Silver (level 4) and Gold (level 5).

Over the last 10 years, WorkKeys®, a product of ACT™ (formerly American College Testing), has become a widely accepted common language for skills definition among employers, educators/trainers and potential/incumbent employees. The power of the WorkKeys® system lies in its: 1) objectivity; 2) simplicity (WorkKeys® skill levels are described in terms of single digit numbers whose meanings are clearly defined and readily accessible); 3) compliance with federal law (ADA, EEOC); and 4) legal defensibility.

Governor Mark R. Warner launched the Virginia ***Career Readiness Certificate*** on October 19, 2004, at which time he recognized more than 5,500 Virginia residents who had already successfully completed the credential, and employers who had invested in the professional skills development of their employees.

Virginians can be assessed at Virginia Workforce Network Career Centers, at any community college, offices of social services, or rehabilitative services. If needed, training is available on-line, or a 6-

week employability skills course, available at some community colleges guarantees its graduates both a ***Career Readiness Certificate*** and a certificate of employability from the college.

Interest in and acceptance of this new credential is growing very fast. The ***Career Readiness Certificate*** has been endorsed by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Manufacturers Association, the Virginia AFL-CIO, and by the Virginia Workforce Council.

Virginia Skills Bank

The availability of a skilled workforce has become the number one issue with employers, both those already doing business in the Commonwealth and those who are considering locating here. There are now many thousands of Virginians with the ***Career Readiness Certificate***, and so Virginia has developed the Virginia Skills Bank as an economic development tool to showcase the skills Virginians have. The Virginia Skills Bank is a free, web-based application that can be queried by zip code, geographic region, college district and in many other ways to show the skill levels of the populace. An interested potential employer can query the database for the region under consideration and determine data like there are 900 people with a Gold CRC, 800 with a Silver and 500 with a Bronze living near where they intend to do business. It does not tell them how many of those people are currently employed, or how many might be willing to work for them but it does indicate a level of skill and trainability that otherwise would not show up. It is also a clear indication to residents and employers alike that Virginia is committed to upgrading and documenting the skills of the workforce.

The Virginia Skills Bank has been structured so that any other state in the ***Consortium*** can utilize it for a small subscription and an annual maintenance fee. Each state will be able to design its own front page but the database will be housed in Virginia. This will ensure a consistent “look and feel” for employers, career seekers, and economic developers.

More information on the ***Career Readiness Certificate*** and the Virginia Skills Bank may be found at www.crc.virginia.gov (after April 1, 2005).

